

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-9 and 11-23 are now pending in the application. Claims 11-14 stand withdrawn. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

DRAWINGS

The drawings stand objected to for certain informalities. Applicants have attached revised drawings for the Examiner's approval. In the "Replacement Sheets" all Japanese characters are changed to English characters.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 3, 5-7, 9, 15-17, and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakamura et al. (JP 11-174972 in view of Hinata (U.S. Pat. No. 6,369,865. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Notwithstanding, to expedite prosecution, Claims 1 and 9 are amended to recite the allowable subject matter of claims 2 and 10 respectively. Claims 2 and 10 are cancelled. Accordingly, these rejections should be moot.

Claim 3 is amended. As amended, claim 3 calls for a supporting frame arranged at a position away from the liquid crystal layer of the second substrate. The supporting frame supports a periphery of the liquid crystal layer. The supporting frame includes an opening at a position corresponding to an interior region of the second substrate.

Figs. 1 and 2 of applicants specification show a supporting member 34 supporting the second substrate 22b. The supporting member 34 is shaped as a frame.

As such, the supporting unit 34a supports a peripheral region of the second substrate 22b.

In contrast, Nakamura fails to disclose a supporting frame. Rather, Nakamura appears to teach spacers (unnumbered “black icons”) between a lower substrate of the liquid crystal panel 91 and a translector 92. Applicant respectfully submits that Nakamura’s spacers do not constitute a “supporting frame.” That is, Nakamura does not disclose whether the spacers surround a given area.

Claim 5 is also amended. As amended, claim 5 calls for an illumination device including a base portion opposite the liquid crystal panel and a supporting portion extending from the base portion. The supporting portion supports at least part of a periphery of the second substrate so that a gap is provided between the second substrate and the base portion of the illumination device.

As shown in Figs. 6 and 7 of Applicants’ specification, a light guide 38/41 is provided below the second substrate 22b. The light guide 38/41 includes a base portion opposite the liquid crystal panel 2. A supporting portion 38b/34 extends from the base portion and supports a peripheral region of the second substrate 22b.

In contrast, Nakamura fails to disclose a light guide having a base portion and a supporting portion supporting a peripheral region of a second substrate. Rather, Nakamura discloses a completely planar light panel 93. No supporting portions are provided which extend from the light panel 93 to a peripheral region of the lower substrate of the liquid crystal panel 91.

Claim 6 further defines the structure of claim 5 inasmuch as the base portion is recited as being integral with the supporting portion. This is shown in Fig. 6 of Applicants’ specification.

Claim 7 also further defines the structure of claim 5 inasmuch as the base portion is recited as being discrete from the supporting portion. This is shown in Fig. 7 of Applicants' specification.

Claim 15 is also amended. Claim 15 calls for a casing supporting the input unit and the liquid crystal panel. The casing includes a frame section supporting the second substrate with a gap on a side of the second substrate away from the liquid crystal layer.

As shown in Fig. 9 of Applicants' specification, a casing 50 is provided for supporting the input unit 4 and the liquid crystal panel 2. The casing 50 includes a frame section 53 supporting the second substrate 22b. The frame section 53 establishes a gap under the second substrate 22b.

In contrast, Nakamura fails to teach a casing having a frame section supporting a second substrate with a gap thereunder. Rather, Nakamura discloses a casing (unnumbered) having a bottom portion under the light guide 93, two side portions along the edges of the structure, and a pair of top portions overlapping the touch panel 95. The casing does not include a frame section supporting the second substrate. Further, no part of the casing forms a gap under the lower substrate of the liquid crystal panel 91.

Claim 16 further defines the structure of claim 15 inasmuch as the casing supports the second substrate at a position corresponding to a region for forming a sealant. This is shown in Fig. 9 of Applicants' specification. The casing 50 includes portions 53 under the sealant 23.

Claim 17 also further defines the structure of claim 15 inasmuch as the frame section is recited as being located between the second substrate and an illumination

device to form the gap. This is shown in Fig. 7 of Applicants' specification. The frame section 53 is located between the second substrate 22b and the illumination device 41.

Claim 19 depends from claim 15 and should be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons as set forth above.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections is respectfully requested.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Examiner states that claims 2, 4, 8, 10 and 18 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 9 to include the limitations of allowable claims 2 and 10. Claims 4, 8 and 18 remain dependent. Notwithstanding, all claims should now be in condition for allowance.

NEW CLAIM

New claim 20 is added. Claim 20 calls for a support member arranged at a position away from the liquid crystal layer of the second substrate. The support member includes a base portion opposite the liquid crystal panel and a supporting portion extending from the base portion and supporting at least part of a periphery of the liquid crystal panel. The supporting portion forms a gap between the base portion and the liquid crystal panel.

As shown in Figs. 4 and 8, a support member 36 provides a gap under the second substrate 22b. The support member 36 includes a base portion opposite the second substrate 22b. A supporting portion 36a extends from the base portion and

supports a peripheral region of the second substrate 22b. Alternate versions of this structure are shown in Figs. 10 and 11.

New claims 21, 22 and 23 are added based on the allowable subject matter of claims 4, 8 and 18 respectively.

Favorable consideration of this new claim is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: November 7, 2003

By: _____

G. Gregory Schivley,
Reg. No. 27,382
Bryant E. Wade
Reg. No. 40,344
Jason A. Heist
Reg. No. 51,797

HARNESS, DICKEY & PIERCE, P.L.C.
P.O. Box 828
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48303
(248) 641-1600

[BEW/cmh]



FIG. 1

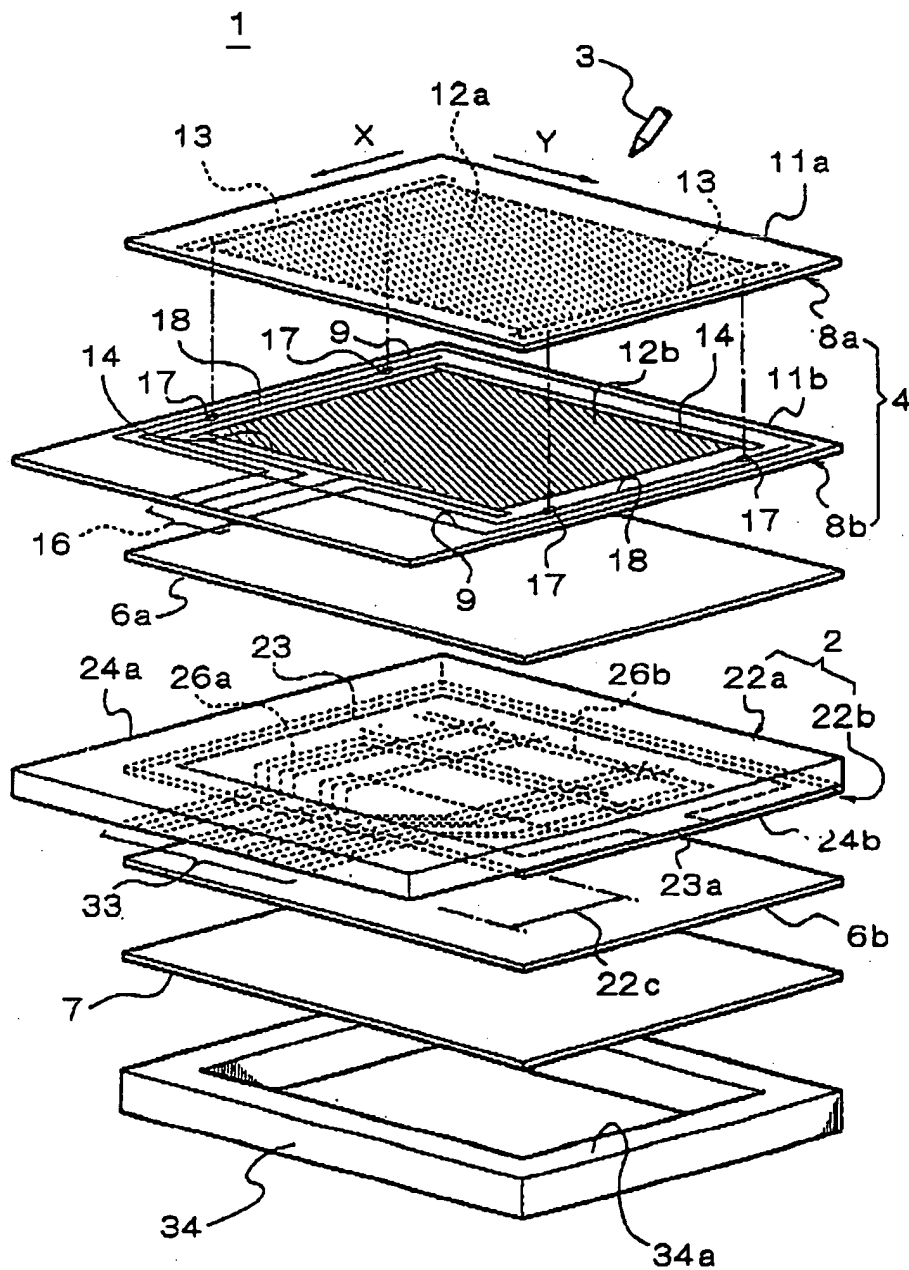




FIG. 2

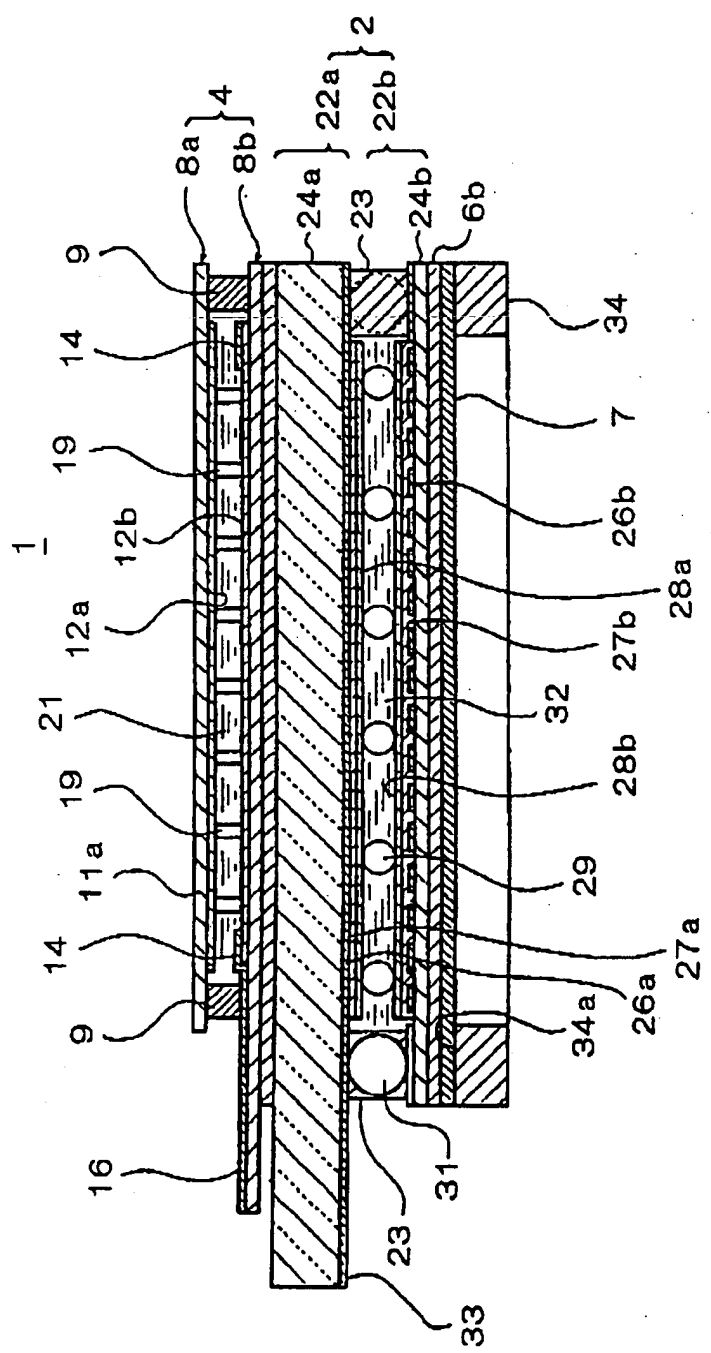




FIG. 3

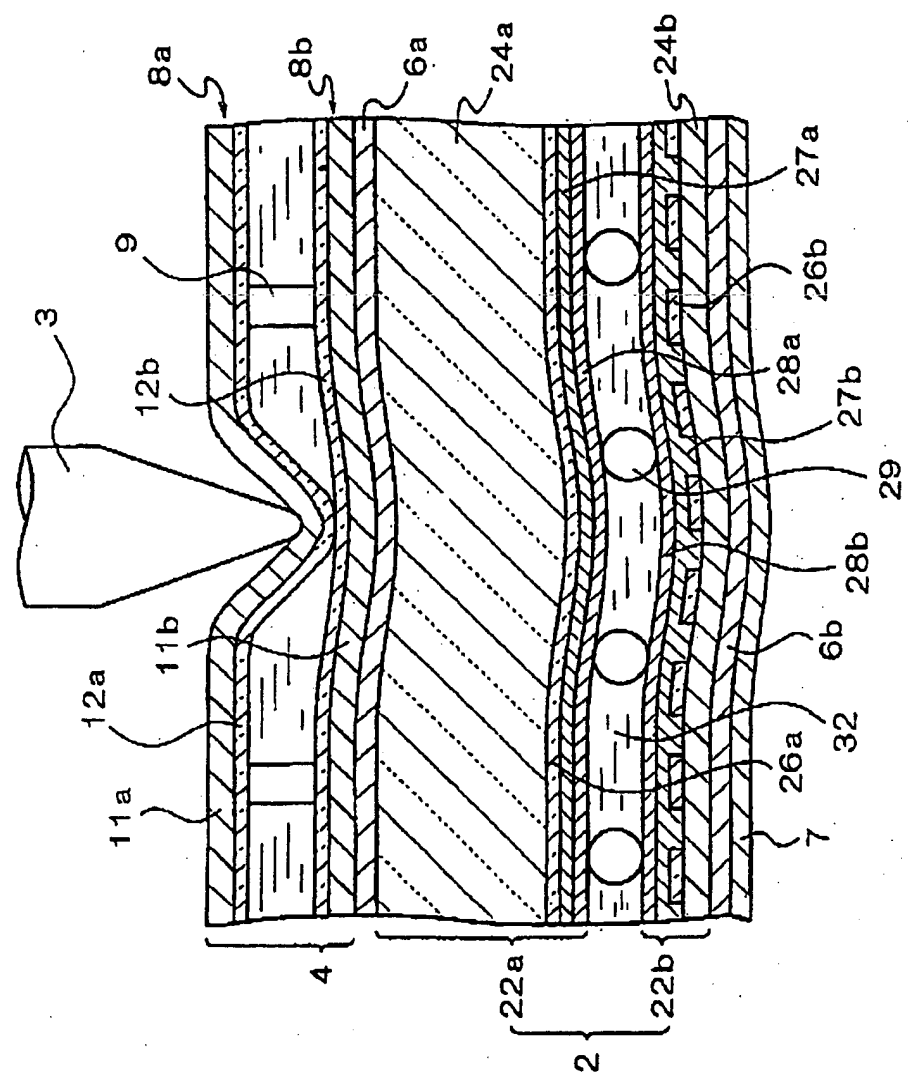




FIG. 4

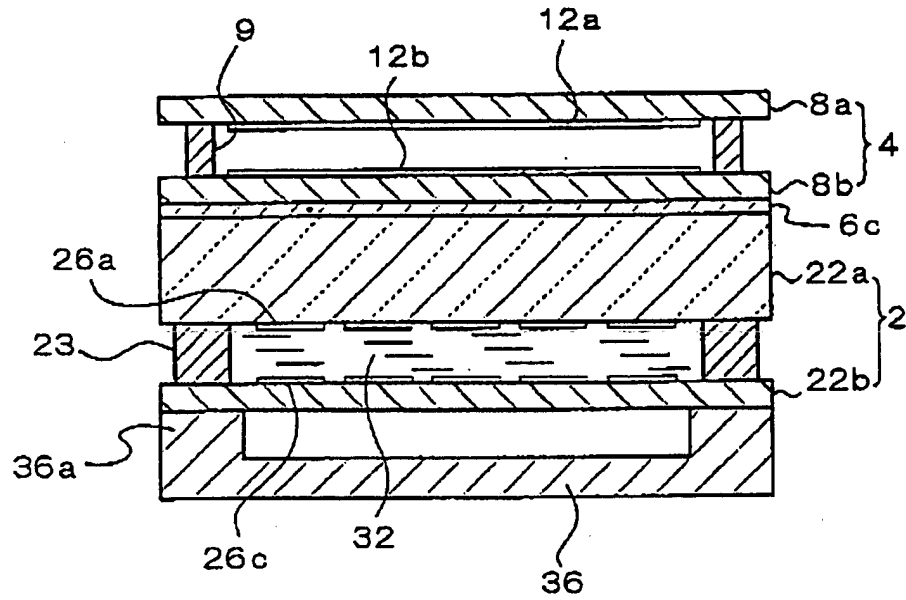


FIG. 5

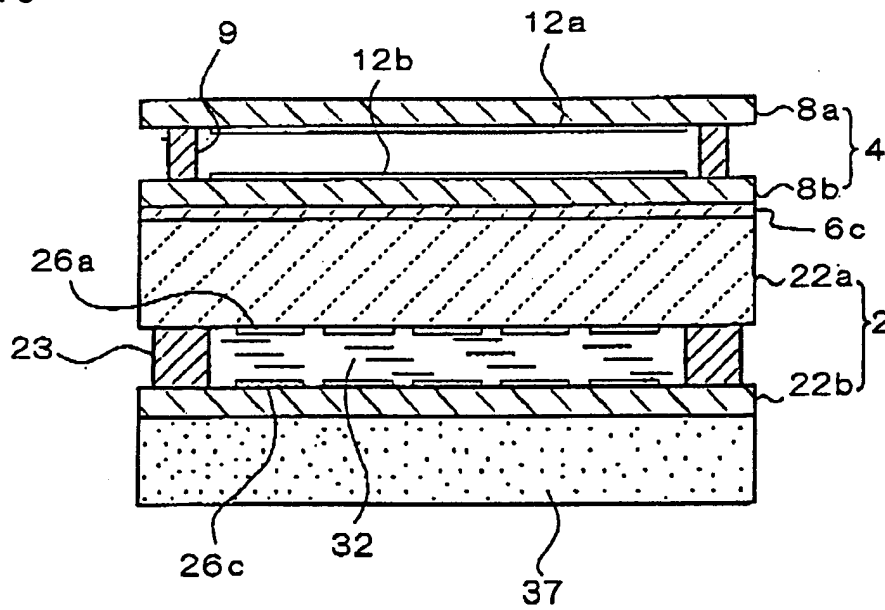


FIG. 6

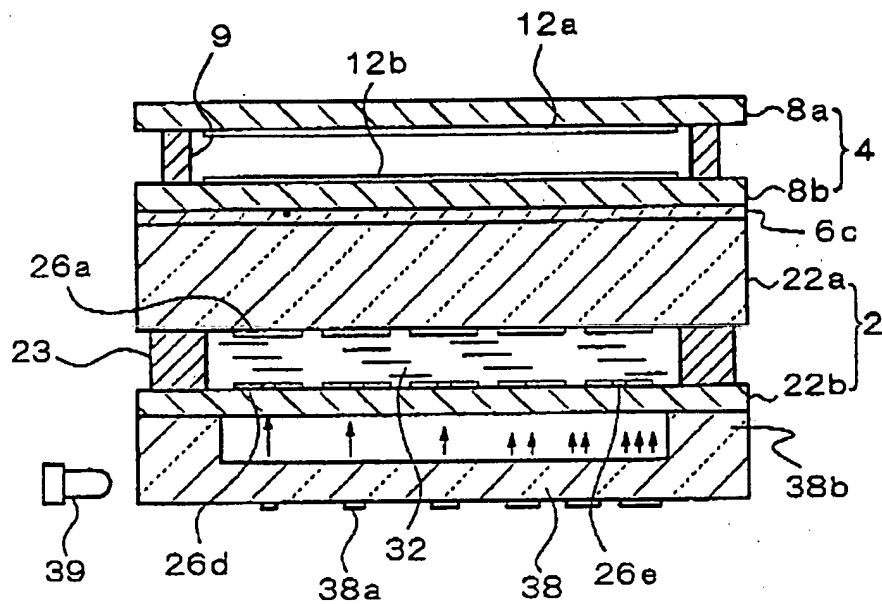


FIG. 7

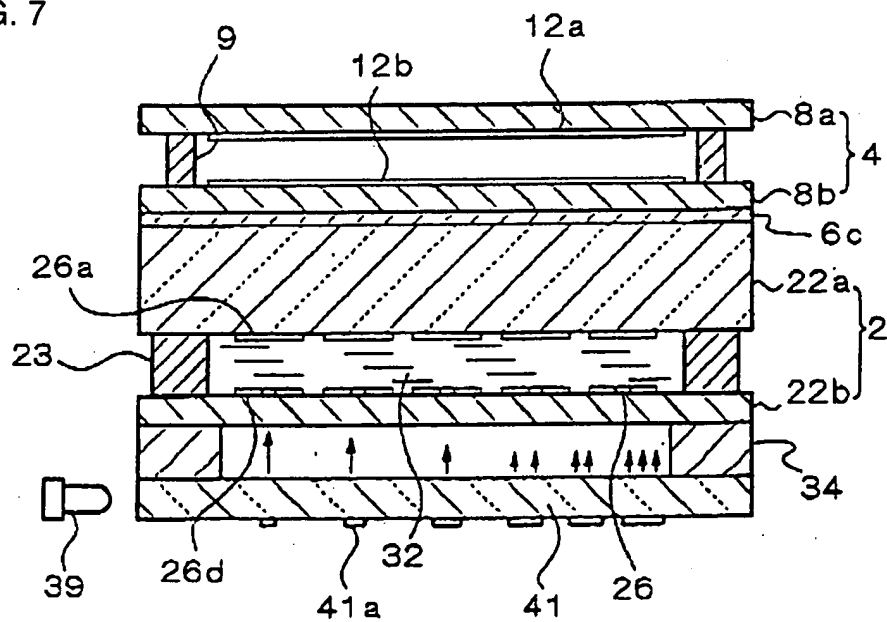




FIG. 8

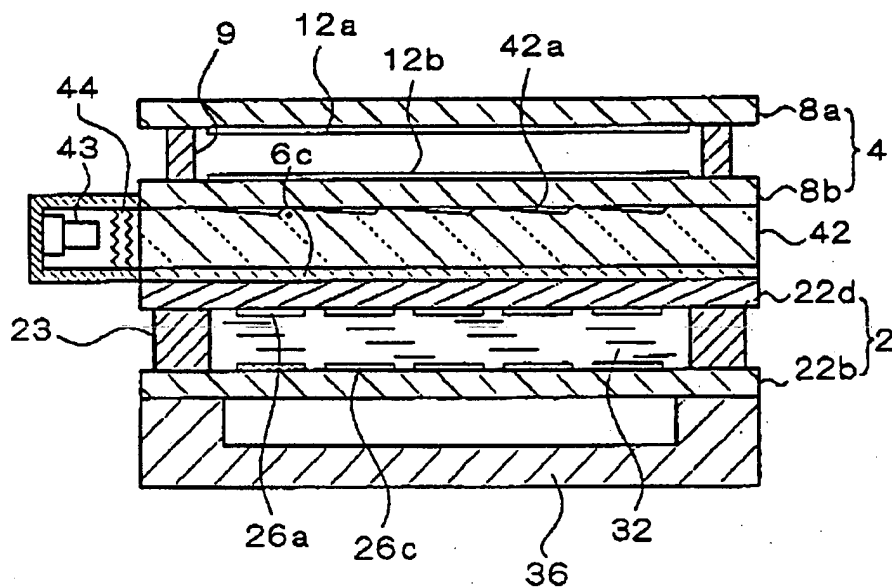


FIG. 9

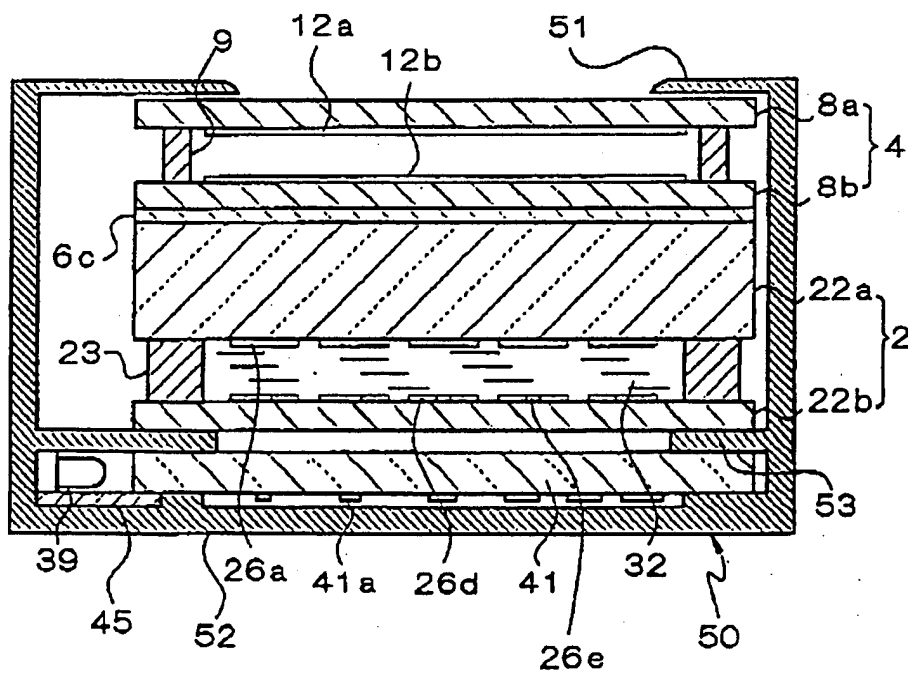




FIG. 10

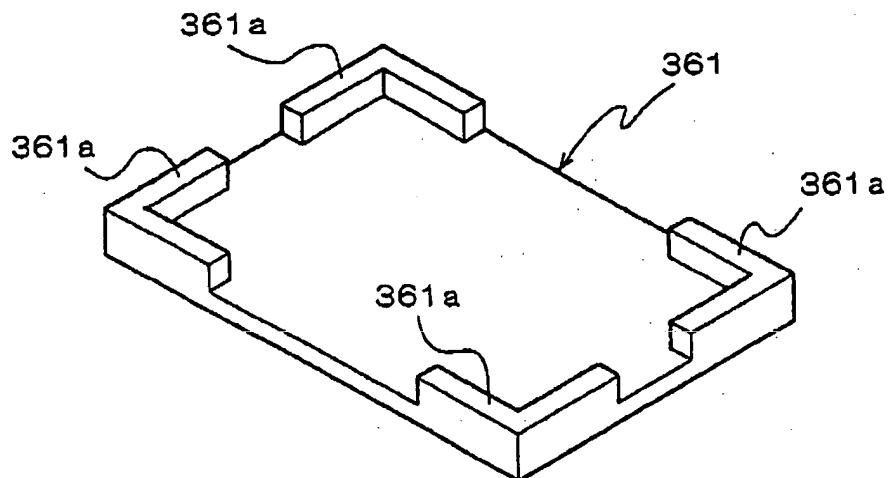


FIG. 11

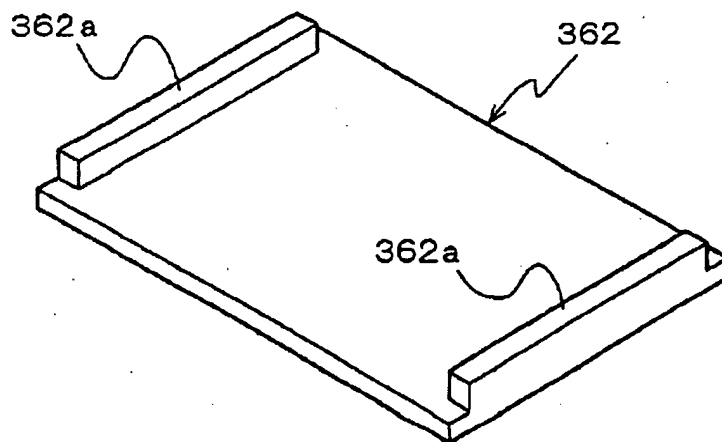




FIG. 12
PRIOR ART

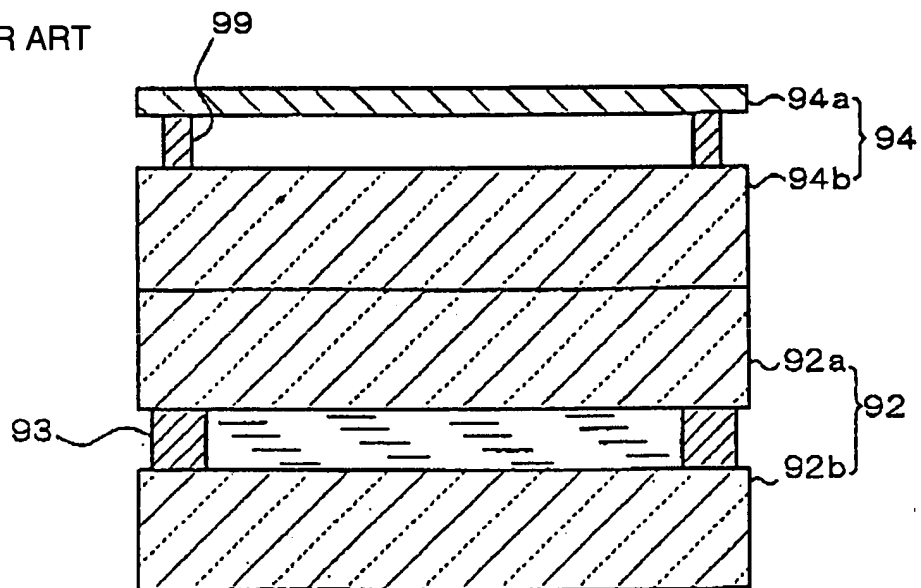


FIG. 13

